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ABSTRACT

The paper suggests ways in which the teacher of English as a second language may use slides to stimulate students by teaching through, and not just about, the slides. Slides are useful when used as a tool to uncover the students' creative and imaginative faculties, which may fail to be discovered through conventional language teaching. The use of slides in the classroom is compared to the use of other visual aids such as filmstrips, film, and photographic prints. The authentic model presented through slides provides the student with information about those individuals who use the language and serves to raise their levels of interest and motivation. Visual aids typically have greater impact and leave a more powerful impression on the audience. With the use of visual aids, it must be remembered: (1) not to overdo their use, (2) to know exactly what one intends to do before one starts, (3) to remain alert to changes and reactions that will occur, and (4) to have the equipment ready to use before starting and to have a practice runthrough. (JK)

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INSTANT REALITY - THE USE (AND MISUSE) OF PHOTOGRAPHIC SLIDES IN THE CLASSROOM

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DEMONSTRATION 1 : CONTEXT-MATCHING EXERCISE

During the course of this presentation, I shall be demonstrating a number of different techniques and ideas for using slides in the EFL classroom. In the process, I shall be breaking the first cardinal rule for using any kind of visual aid, which is

DON'T OVERDO IT !

Too much of any good thing leads to overexposure, and in the case of visual aids this means glazed eyeballs and a loss of motivation and concentration. In an attempt to avoid this, I shall stagger the demonstrations and intersperse them with bits of talk. My other golden rules, incidentally, are :

- KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU INTEND TO DO BEFORE YOU START
- AT THE SAME TIME, BE ALERT TO OTHER IDEAS THAT MAY ARISE
- ALWAYS HAVE THE EQUIPMENT SET UP AND READY TO USE BEFORE YOU START, AND HAVE A PRACTICE RUN THROUGH THE SLIDES

Apart from making a number of practical suggestions for use, the main area I'd like to cover is, "Why use slides at all ?"

A number of language schools that I've worked in have had slide projectors lying in dusty corners of the aids room, virtually unused.
The reasons usually given for this are, firstly, that they are complicated to set up and fiddly to use, and secondly, a lack of good software - that is, published material in slide form.

The first is true to some extent, but less so now that reliable slide projectors using a cartridge system are available at a reasonable price. Slides can be permanantly stored in these cartridges and need not be handled at all..

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The second objection is certainly true - I don't know if schools don't buy them because publishers don't publish them or if it's the other way round - publishers don't make them because they don't think anyone will buy them. I feel the main reason that slides aren't used a lot more is that people - teachers and publishers - are unaware of the potential range of applications.

To put the advantages and disadvantages of slides in a context, I would like to refer to a crude family tree of teaching aids.(see diagram)

FIRST BRANCH

The visual component plays a major role in most forms of communication: think of the difference between a face-to-face conversation and a telephone conversation, which is the same live, two-way interaction but without the visual element. Similarly, think of the difference between T.V. and radio broadcasts, both forms of one-way communication.

The classrooom teacher provides a lot of this vusial element, but he/she is limited to the extent to which he/she can exploit this, unless he/she is a superb actor or mime artist. It is really only quite recently that most publishers have realised the importance of good visuals as teaching aids in their own right, rather than as just an attractive or humourous way of supplementing the written text.

Visual aids offer a way of bringing the outside world into the classroom; they are a meeting point between language and reality. Carefully used, they stimulate students to draw on their different backgrounds and experiences as well as their different perceptions of the visual. Visuals can be as ambiguous as words or sentences, open to different interpretations in creative discussion. This ambiguity can be deliberate on the part of the artist or photographer, or it may be perceived by the beholder in different ways.

DEMONSTRATION TWO : OLD AND NEW

One form of abuse of slides, or any other form of visual aids, is to treat them only at the superficial, descriptive, level; the kind of question and answer treatment that goes :

"What's this red thing in the middle of the road, Luigi ?"

"It's a bus, teacher."

"And what's the man in the black car doing, Ahmed ?"

"He's having an accident teacher."

Although this can be a good way to start, in order to exploit the power of slides to stimulate, the teacher must teach <u>through</u> the slides, not just <u>about</u> them, using them as a tool to uncover the students' creative and imaginative faculties lying under the debris of conventional language teaching.

<u>SECOND BRANCH</u>

Film and video are good at telling a story or providing background information about, or a conceptual overview of, a particular subject. Still pictures present a fixed amount of information, which can be exploited in as much or as little detail as required. Still pictures can be more creative, in that they do not determine a story or a sequence of events: they show the state of affairs at one point in time, allowing speculation about what went before and what is likely to come after.

DEMONSTRATION THREE : HOW or WHY ?

Modern cine projectors and video equipment allow the use of the freeze frame technique, whereby the teacher can stop the film on a single frame or picture. Carefully used, this can form the basis of predictive activities, such as

"What do you think will happen next ?"

or "Judging by the expression on his face, what do you think this man is about to say ?"

Likewise, short excerpts can be selected and students asked to create or imagine the context. However, if this technique is used too often, it tends to jar the audience's expectations, which are of continuous movement. This questions of expectation leads on to the other major problem with the use of film and video, which is the 'Switch on, turn off' syndrome. Film, T.V. and video are regarded universally as sources of entertainment first and education second.

THIRD BRANCH

The practical advantage of projected aids is that for a small original - 35 mm or A4 for example - you get a projecte picture many times larger, an image that is both more powerful and more detailed. By comparison, flashcards and convenient but suitable for small groups only, while wallcharts, which are the size of a projected picture, are expensive and cumbersome.

The main disadvantage is that projection requires more or less complex equipment - a power source, a projector with a bulb that works, and a good focussing device, as well as partial blackout and a screen or other suitable surface (the movie syndrome that this creates is an attraction as well as a drawback - it does create the anticipation of pleasure: "Oh goody, we're going to see a movie")
Would any body here admit to having come solely to see the slides ? Faced with a choice between two lectures that seemed equally interesting - or equally boring - I would always go for the one with projected visual aids, whatever the subject was. Not being a cognitive psychologist, I will content myself with the statement that

PROJECTED VISUAL AIDS HAVE GREATER IMPACT - THEY MAKE A MORE POWERFUL IMPRESSION ON THE AUDIENCE.

DEMONSTRATION FOUR : SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

FOURTH BRANCH

The 35 mm format is the most highly developed and used branch of photography; hence it is the best and cheapest format in which to buy equipment and to take and develop pictures. It is very good for fine detail, because the quality of reproduction is very high. It is therefore good for seeking or pinpointing information and for giving a very realistic rperesentation of the outside world. As well as the normal 'life-size'image, it can be sued on either a a 'Macro' scale - panoramas or aerial views; or an a 'mocro' scale - exploring minutely detailed subjects such as printed circuits.

With a standard camera, therefore, you can produce your own projected visual aids that look professional at low cost - slides cost around 10 to 15p each including cost of film, developing and mounting. Or, as part of a project, you can get students to take picture themselves

and present them to the other members of the group or school. Buying in prepared slides from a publisher costs between 15 and 25p each, which still compares very favourably with other published visual aids.

DEMONSTRATION FIVE : THEMATIC TRUE/FALSE EXERCISE

At this stage, I should perhaps say a word or two about signs. They constitute the majority of the slides I am demonstrating here, partly because they offer such fertile ground for language practice, and partly because they are complete and authentic texts that are short enough to be exploited economically.

Authentic materials - and for my own purpose I am here defining authentic materials as written or printed messages not specifically designed for teaching purposes - are all around us, at home, at work and in the street. They add a strong element of realism, and hence motivation, to the classroom. Some such materials are easily portable - such as a cornflakes packet or a driving licence application form - but others are securely fixed to buildings or vehicles, and it would constitute a criminal offence to try to remove them. If you can't have the sign itself, a colour slide is the next best thing - in fact bettter in some ways, as slides are much easier to carry and store than large metal road signs.

I mentioned a moment ago that signs are complete and brief texts. This is an important feature: when language learners have to use their second or foreign language in the real world to deal with written or printed material, that material almost always comes as a whole text, that is, a communication that is a complete and self-contained message. This is reflected in language teaching materials which present a whole text in each unit of study. Because these texts are often long - perhaps several hundred words - exploiting them, for whatever purose, can take time.

The use of authentic sings satisfies the communicative desirability od using whole texts while at the same time keeping to a minimum the time taken to appreciate the overall meaning of the text. THe satisfaction gained by this overall comprehension is thus the more immediate, without the frustrating process of acquiring a large amount of new vocabulary. For people actually visiting the country of the target language, the ability to understand signs can be important - I am indebted to Iain P.K. for telling me about a sign he saw in E. Europe which said, in the language of that country,

WARNING - TRESPASSERS WILL BE SHOT

DEMONSTRATION SIX : SEARCHING FOR SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Overhead projectors don't give the same quality and clarity as 35 mm, but they do have other advantages.

1. They are simpler - there are fewer moving parts to go wrong.
2. They are easier to operate.
3. They provide a bright picture under normal room lighting
4. The material being projected can be created or amended, by teacher or student, during the presentation.
5. OHP transparencies can be made from any flat paper original on an increasing number of ordinary photocopy machines; this can now also be done in colour. This has made redundant the episcope, which was formerly the only way of projecting opaque or solid objects.

FIFTH BRANCH

The choice between fimstrips and slides is really a practical one, depending on your circumstances and purposes of use. Filmstrips are easier to store in quantity and present pictures in a fixed order. They are also more vulnerable to accidental abuse by teacher or student; they are easily marked by dust or fingerprints; and are liable to tear if the projector is badly set up or badly operated. Slides are better protected, and in hazardous conditions, can be sandwiched between thin sheets of glass held together by the plastic mount, for extra protection.

The order of slides is not fixed, so that you can put extra items in, take some out or re-order a whole sequence to suit a particualr class or lesson plan. This gives an immense flexibility that is absent from film, video or filmstrip.

Automatic slide projectors can now be bought at very reasonable cost, so that you don't have to stand beside the machine all the time. Although you can get filmstrip projectors with an automatic wind on mechanism, they are specialised educational tools, and hence more expensive and harder to find than automatic slide projectors.
This feature of automatic or remote change can be exploited by limiting the projection time for eachslide - reflecting the fact that in real life, we don't have all the time in the world to read a sign or other piece of authentic material - like the real world, it puts pressure of time on the task in hand.

You may not happen to like this idea - although it has obvious applications in the field of testing - and there are certainly activities where any kind of time pressure would be inappropriate. One other point I would make, however, is that you can increase or decrease the difficulty of a particualr task merely by giving less or more time for it to be performed.

DEMONSTRATION SEVEN : SEEKING LEXICAL EQUIVALENTS

The filmstrip was for many years the classic projected medium of the secondary school audio-visual presentation, which was pre-determined and teacher-controlled; for EFL purposes, especially if students are to be involved in the presentation, the flexibility of slides may be the deciding factor.

It may be that the lack of imagination that went into the publication and exploitation of filmstrips in schools has been responsible for their poor image and low level of use in British EFL publishing and teaching.

As far as I know, there are at present no published packages of EFL course materials that contain slides (Although I believe the BBC Challenges course now does so - this is where twenty people come up to me afterwards to tell me how wrong I am). The Penguin course "Success with English" by Broughton used to have a set of twelve slides, but these are now not available; and a small number of course books do have filmstrips available as part of the package, for example

First Things First by Alexander
Target by Alexander and others
Access by Coles and Lord
English by Objectives by Ferguson and O'Reilly

As afar as I know, all these filmstrips consist of is cartoon drawings - they are basically strip cartoon versions of the events or story occurring in the main text of the unit. They can certainly be a useful way of revising the teaching points of a unit through a different medium from the original text or tape presentation, but it seems a sad waste of the potential of the 35mm format for introducing reality to the classroom that these filmstrips should consist solely of rather crudely drawn strip cartoons.

DEMONSTRATION EIGHT : CARTOONS

Having said that, I think there is definitely a place for cartoons in the sense of drawings that are intentionally funny. My own preferred teaching style here is to use just two or three at a time, as a means of focussing the class's attention at the beginning of a lesson, as a final five minutes' relaxation exercise, as a bit of light relief between two heavier parts of a long lesson, or as something for one or twoo quicker students to look at while the others are finishing off an exercise or activity. (Other ideas please ?)

There are two further points I would like to make.

Firstly, to anticipate one criticism that can be made of the use of English signs: namely, that they are culture-bound and biassed towards the U.K. and hence irrelevant to many overseas students.
I am indebted to Vivian Cook for a recent article he wrote in Modern English Teacher, Vol 9 No 2, in which he answers this point in terms of the reasons for using authentic materials in general.

> "Perhaps the most important reason is the students' motivation and interest. One of the powerful reasons for learning a new language is to get closer to its speakers, to understand them better and take part in their lives, in other words, the integrative motivation. Authentic materials utilise this motivation very strongly by their ordinariness and flavour of everyday life; they seem exotic and exciting, the very stuff of strange foreign life. For students who have this motivation, authentic materials are a highly effective way of bringing the target culture closer; this is as near to participation as they will get without actually living in the country."

He goes on to point out that authentic materials are even more relevant for students aiming to visit the country; in this case, it is possible to assess the kinds of authentic materials that are going to be most helpful and relevant to them.

Thirdly, for students who do not have a high degree of integrative motivation, and who are not likely to visit the country, he justifies the use of authentic materials by saying that all language syllabuses are defective representation of the target language, and that therefore there are bound to be gaps; the best way of filling these gaps is by using authentic materials, which will automatically include any important structure or vocabulary item that has been ignored in the syllabus.

The second, and truly final point, is that I have demonstrated only a very few ways of using slides, and suggested a few more. There are vast areas I have left uncovered - for example, the whole field of slide/tape programmes, which adds the dimension of pre-recorded sound. It was not my intention to try to list every possible idea for exploitation, but rather to show that slides offer a powerful, cheap and highly flexible medium for bringing the real world into the classroom, and to encourage the experimentation with new ideas that I hope will come from an increasing awareness of this potential. I hope, particularly, that in the discussion that follows, you will come up with some new ideas and techniques that I haven't suggested, as well as making critical appraisals of the ones I have.

(DEMONSTRATION NINE : FORMAL REGISTER) -. if time

HANDOUT

INSTANT REALITY - THE USE OF SLIDES IN THE CLASSROOM

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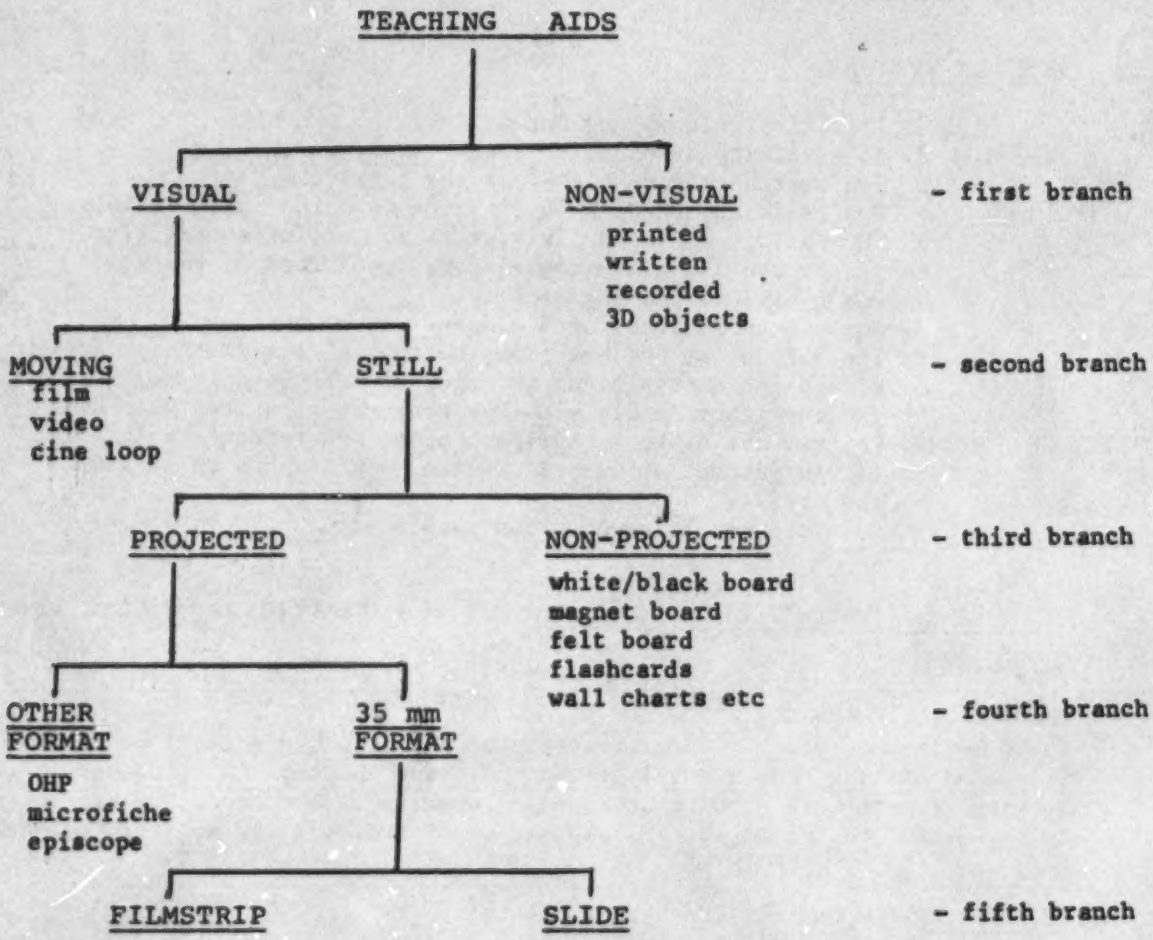
Slides are a powerful, cheap and highly flexible medium for bringing reality into the classroom. This presentation aims to demonstrate a few tech-techniques for exploitation, and to suggest the potential for a great many more.



The golden rules :
- DON'T OVERDO IT !
- KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU INTEND TO DO BEFORE YOU START
- AT THE SAME TIME, BE ALERT TO WHATEVER MAY CROP UP
- ALWAYS HAVE THE EQUIPMENT SET UP AND READY TO USE BEFORE YOU START, AND HAVE A PRACTICE RUN THROUGH.

PRACTICAL DEMONSTRATIONS, in order :

1. CONTEXT MATCHING. In which of the following places would you expect to see each of the pictures ?

___ the park	___ outside the police station	___ job agency
___ public toilet	___ outside office or factory	___ in shop window
___ laundrette	___ railway train	___ restaurant
___ building site	___ underground station	___ on the beach

2. OLD AND NEW CONTRASTS : DISCUSSION

3. HOW OR WHY ? Describe or imagine the events that led up to this picture .

4. SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

5. TRUE OR FALSE ?

1. This timetable is now out of date. _____
2. It's safe to drink this water. _____
3. You must show your ticket at the barrier. _____
4. Trains in the South West division are the most reliable. _____
5. The Railair office sells tickets to Gatwick at any time. _____
6. If you use the alarm signal for a good reason, you won't have to pay any penalty. _____
7. Some of these stations are open at weekends only. _____
8. The purpose of the emergency button is to call the police. _____
9. If you see a suspicious package, you should only pull the emergency handle when the train is at a station. _____
10. You may not smoke in any part of an Underground train. _____
11. If you get out at Russell Square, you'll have to walk up the stairs. _____
12. Dogs are not allowed on the escalator. _____

6. SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION Listen to the question and find the answer.

7. LEXICAL INFERENCE Find a word or phrase that means :

1. it won't hurt you 2. frustrated, bored 3. not working 4. changes
5. period of time 6. a small street 7. over the top 8. stop people getting in
9. when it gets dark 10. clothes being washed 11. correct, right
12. pay back 13. disappeared 14. had money stolen 15. your clothes examined

8. CARTOONS - various ideas as 'fillers'

REFERENCES

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Ralph Cable Audio Visual Handbook Hodder & Stoughton 1972

Old & New, Spot The Difference and Cartoon Slides by courtesy of The Slide Centre London, SW11.